

What is claimed is:

1. A method of monitoring a patient, comprising the steps of:

placing a pressure pad that is encased in a cover on a resting place for the patient;

energizing the pressure pad, whereby a signal is provided responsive to pressure placed on the pressure pad by the patient;

arming the pressure pad when a predetermined weight is on the pressure pad whereby the pressure pad serves as a sensor;

activating an alarm when the predetermined weight is removed from the armed pressure pad; and

disposing of the pressure pad when the patient no longer has use of the pressure pad.

2. A method according to claim 1 wherein the pressure pad is a first sensor and a second sensor is placed in juxtaposition with the patient so that when the patient assumes a dangerous position as indicated by the second sensor an alarm signal is given, a monitoring station is activated when the alarm signal is provided, and a voice message is announced near the patient.

3. A method in accordance with claim 1 wherein an alarm is provided to a caretaker.

4. A method in accordance with claim 1 wherein the alarm is near the patient.

5. A method in accordance with claim 1 wherein the alarm is at a remote station.

6. A method of monitoring a patient in accordance with claim 1 wherein the cover is plastic and is torn when the pressure pad is to be disposed of.

7. A method of monitoring a patient, comprising the steps of:

placing a pressure pad under the patient that activates a first switch when energized;

attaching a fastener to the patient, wherein if the patient moves beyond a predetermined distance, a second switch moves between one of an open state or a closed state to the other of the open or closed state; and

providing an alarm signal when either the first switch or the second switch is activated wherein the pressure pad is activated by removal of pressure and reset by application of pressure.

8. A method in accordance with claim 7 wherein the fastener is attached to clothing of the patient.

9. A method in accordance with claim 7 further including the step of providing a verbal message to the patient.

10. A method in accordance with claim 7 further including the step of transmitting a signal to a remote station and providing an alarm to a caretaker at the remote station.

11. Apparatus for monitoring a patient, comprising:

a pressure pad for providing a signal indicating a pressure condition;

a control housing connected to and located adjacent to the pressure pad and responsive to the signal; and

a casing at least partly encasing the control housing and the pressure pad.

12. Apparatus for monitoring a patient in accordance with claim 11 in which the pressure pad is activated by removal of pressure and inactivated by application of pressure.

13. Apparatus in accordance with claim 11 further including a recorded voice message sounding within hearing distance of the patient.

14. Apparatus in accordance with claim 11 wherein the pressure pad responds to pressure by reducing electrical resistance between a first point and a second point, said apparatus including a switch armed upon the reduction of electrical resistance and an alarm for providing the alarm when the switch has been armed and the electrical

resistance is under a predetermined resistance threshold for more than 1 second, wherein a movement of the patient from the pressure pad triggers the alarm.

15. A patient monitoring system according to claim 14 in which the alarm provides the alarm when the switch has been armed and electrical resistance is under the predetermined resistance threshold for a time between 2 seconds and 3 seconds in duration.

16. A pressure pad comprising:

a gel cushion;

an alarm system having a pressure switch and an alarm;

said pressure switch being in communication with said gel cushion, whereby pressure on the gel cushion results in pressure on the pressure switch;

said alarm being connected to said pressure switch to be controlled thereby; and

said alarm system being activated by pressure on the pressure switch.

17. A pressure pad according to claim 16 wherein the alarm system is armed upon pressure being placed on the pressure pad and activated upon a release of the pressure if said pressure is removed longer than a predetermined time after the alarm is activated.

18. A pressure pad according to claim 17 in which the alarm is a visible alarm.

19. A pressure pad according to claim 17 in which the alarm is an audible alarm.

20. A pressure pad according to claim 17 in which the pressure switch includes two conductors spaced by a flexible material that permits contact between the conductors under a predetermined amount of pressure.